***Roman Mythology***



The above picture is of the Pantheon, which means "temple consecrated to all gods", it is a building in [Rome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rome), [Italy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy), commissioned by [Marcus Agrippa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus_Agrippa) as a [temple](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple) to all the gods of [Ancient Rome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Rome), and rebuilt by [Emperor Hadrian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emperor_Hadrian) in about 126 AD.

**What kind of gods did Romans worship?**

At first, Romans believed in many different gods and goddesses. These gods were like people, but with magical powers. The Roman gods were part of a family. People told stories or *myths* about them. Each god or goddess looked after different people or things.

These are a few of the old Roman gods:

**Saturn:** once king of the gods, his place was taken by his son (Jupiter). Saturn was the god of seed-sowing. A merry Roman holiday or festival, the Saturnalia, was named after him.  
**Jupiter:** god of the sky, he was the most important god.  
**Juno:** Jupiter's wife  
**Neptune:** Jupiter's brother, he was the god of the sea.  
**Minerva:** goddess of wisdom   
**Mars:** god of war  
**Venus:** goddess of love

### Why did the Romans borrow new gods?

The Romans often borrowed new gods from people they conquered. They hoped these new gods would make them stronger. They borrowed gods from Egypt, for example, such as the goddess Isis. Roman soldiers worshipped Mithras, a god from Iran. A soldier going on a journey might ask Mercury (god of travel) for help, as well as Mithras the soldiers' god and he might also make a sacrifice to Neptune (the sea god) if he had to travel by ship

### What went on a Roman temple?

People worshipped the gods in special buildings called temples. Inside the temple was a statue of a god. Priests looked after the temple. People went there to make sacrifices or offerings of food, flowers or money. Sometimes the priest killed an animal, such as a bull, as part of the sacrifice ceremony. Some Emperors said they were gods too, so everyone had to make a sacrifice to the Emperor.

Romans also had gods at home. They believed in household spirits that protected the family. They had miniature temples, or shrines, in their homes. The family would make offerings of food and drink to the household gods, and pray for good luck and protection.

### Did Romans believe in life after death?

The Romans believed that a person's spirit went to the *underworld* after the person died. To get there, the dead needed to cross the River Styx. The dead person's family would leave a coin on the dead body, to pay the ferryman, whose name was Charon.

Some of these old beliefs changed when Christianity was made the official religion of the Roman Empire in the 4th century AD. Before then, Christians got into trouble because they refused to worship the emperor as a god. Some Christians were arrested and put to death

Questions to Answer w/ the reading.

1. What kinds of Gods did Romans worship? From whose culture did the Romans borrow their gods and goddess?
2. Why did the Romans borrow new gods and they conquered civilizations?
3. What is the most important Roman temple built for all the Roman Gods? What other cultures influence can be observed in the architecture of the building?
4. Explain what happened to a Roman’s spirit after the dead? Also, how did the deceased person’s family ensure they made it to the underworld?
5. Why were Christians persecuted in the Roman Empire?

**GREEK AND ROMAN GODS AND GODDESSES**

The Olympians are a group of 12 gods who ruled after the overthrow of the Titans. All

the Olympians are related in some way. They are named after their dwelling place,

Mount Olympus. The Romans and the Greeks shared the same stories, but they used

different names. Choose from the list below and find the correct Roman god.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Roman Name** | **Greek Name** | **Description** |
|  | Zeus | He was the master of the gods and the main god of the Romans. In his hand he held thunderbolts which he could  hurl from the sky. |
|  | Hera | She was the wife of Jupiter, the goddess of marriage and  fertility. Her symbols were a pomegranate and a peacock. |
|  | Ares | He was the god of war, the strongest and most fearsome  god, except for Jupiter. |
|  | Aphrodite | She was the goddess of love and beauty. |
|  | Athena | She was the goddess of wisdom, learning, art, crafts and  industry. Her symbol was the owl. |
|  | Poseidon | He was the powerful god of the sea. His symbol was the  trident. |
|  | Hades | He was the god of the underworld. The sacred symbol of Hades was his **helmet**, which helped him stay invisible. His sacred animal was **Cerberus**, his own three-headed dog. |
|  | Artemis | She was the goddess of hunting and a goddess of the  moon. |
|  | Hermes | He was the messenger of the gods. The wings on his helmet and sandals allowed him to travel very quickly to  wherever a god might send him. He was the god of  travelers and tradesmen. |
|  | Apollo | God of music, healing, light, and truth. He moved the sun  across the sky |

**JUNO MERCURY DIANA MARS MINERVA**

**VENUS NEPTUNE PLUTO JUPITER APOLLO**